

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
OMB-01 IO-13 TRSE-00 /080 W
-----124597 281351Z /47
R 280912Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0070

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 24738

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, TH
SUBJ: STUDENT UNION ELECTIONS AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY

REF: BANGKOK 23027

1. THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS COMPLETED VOTING ON AUGUST 24 FOR REPRESENTATIVES TO NEWLY ESTABLISHED STUDENT UNION (DESCRIBED IN REFTEL). THE WINNING CANDIDATES RAN UNOPPOSED AND WERE ALL MEMBERS OF "GROUP FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY," AN ORGANIZATION OF POLITICALLY ACTIVE STUDENTS WHO STRONGLY OPPOSE POLICIES OF THAMMASAT RECTOR PRAPHAT UAI-CHAI AND NEWLY PROMULGATED STUDENT CHARTER (DESCRIBED IN REFTEL) ON GROUNDS THAT BOTH ARE UNDEMOCRATIC AND RESTRICT STUDENT FREEDOM. DESPITE STRONG CRITICISM LEVELED AT ADMINISTRATION, ELECTION WAS PEACEFUL AND ORDERLY, AND THERE WERE NO DEMONSTRATIONS ON CAMPUS.

2. ON AUGUST 25, EMBOFF SPOKE WITH ASSISTANT VICE RECTOR FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS AT THAMMASAT WHO WAS IN CHARGE OF CONDUCTING ELECTIONS. HE HAD MET WITH MEMBERS OF VICTORIOUS GROUP DAY BEFORE AND BELIEVED THEY HAD NO MORE
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THAN 300 ACTIVE SUPPORTERS. HE ATTRIBUTED LACK OF OPPOSITION CANDIDATES TO STUDENT APATHY. ANOTHER PROFESSOR ALSO BELIEVED "GROUP FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY" REPRESENTED A MINORITY OF THAMMASAT STUDENTS, BUT NUMBERED THEIR SUPPORTERS AT CLOSER TO 500.

3. ELECTION OF AN ANTI-ADMINISTRATION SLATE OF CANDIDATES

COULD LEAD TO CONFLICT BETWEEN UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION
AND STUDENT LEADERS. HOWEVER, IT IS UNCLEAR, GIVEN THE
PEACEFUL NATURE OF THE ELECTIONS, WHETHER SUCH CONFLICT
WILL MOTIVATE MAJORITY OF STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN
DEMONSTRATIONS OR OTHER POLITICAL ACTIVITY. ABRAMOWITZ

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